



Everything I Learned About AI Success, I Learned Playing Basketball in Alaska

Aligning AI and Analytics Initiatives
with Real Business Outcomes

Tim Riddle, Premier

Senior Director, AI and Analytics



About Me

Tim Riddle, Senior Director, AI and Analytics, Premier



ROLE TODAY

Premier's partnership leader for Databricks, IMO and others

Leads special initiatives across AI and analytics

25+ years shipping AI and analytics to production

THE ROAD HERE

Grew up in the sticks of Alaska

Earlier careers in restaurant and retail management

In healthcare: Six Sigma, medical device analytics, leading an innovation center

Product management across multiple domains



HOW MY KIDS DESCRIBE THE JOB

"Daddy tells stories with healthcare data to keep people safe."





Better
with National Scale

Smarter
with Actionable Intelligence

Faster
with Novel Technologies



Alaskan Basketball

Small town, long winters, and a coach who taught me how teams actually win.

SMALL ROSTER

Everyone learned every position, so the team never depended on one player.

LONG TRAVEL

Hours of travel to reach a game meant effort was the entry fee, not the advantage.

ONE SCOREBOARD

Practice was judged by what showed up in the game, not by how it felt.



COACH'S CORNER

"If you think you are going to fail, you will."

Belief, preparation and fundamentals travel from that gym straight into how AI programs succeed.

Ted DeLeon



Ted DeLeon could easily be considered the dean of high school basketball in Fairbanks after a 31-year coaching career that spanned 675 games from 1962 to 1993. In 1990, he led West Valley High School to the ASAA Class 4A state championship and was named Coach of the Year. It was the last Fairbanks team to win a 4A title. DeLeon compiled a career record of 404-271 at West Valley and Eielson. He started at Eielson in 1962 and coached the Class A champions in 1966 and 1974. He was voted Fairbanks Sportsman of the Year in 1974. Away from the hardwood, he coached high school wrestling, football and track and field. DeLeon was instrumental in establishing the Alaska Association of Basketball Coaches and served as a president of the organization.



The AI scoreboard is unforgiving

Most organizations have adopted AI. Far fewer have converted it into enterprise value.

88%

of organizations regularly use AI in at least one function

39%

report any enterprise-level EBIT impact

22%

track business impact metrics for most D&A use cases

THE THESIS

AI wins when it moves from "interesting capability" to governed, measured, workflow-embedded execution.

Your job is to design and play the odds to maximize success



Sources: McKinsey 2025; Gartner CDAO Survey 2025.

Believe in Yourself: You cannot prompt your way to judgment

Judgment is not learned from a book. Adaptability is not built by staying comfortable.

BOTH ARE DEVELOPED THROUGH

Experience

Feedback

Reflection

Growth through discomfort

MUSCLE ONE

Judgment

Experience × Reflection

MUSCLE TWO

Adaptability

Experience × Variety



"If you aren't uncomfortable, you are not getting better"



ASK YOURSELF

What have you personally done to make yourself uncomfortable lately?

TAKEAWAY

You can have 20 years of experience and still have poor judgment if you have repeated the same year 20 times.

Bottom line: growth happens when you step through unfamiliar doors, not when you stay where you are already successful.



Sources: Kahneman & Klein (2009); Ericsson et al. (1993); Kolb (1984); Schön (1983); DeRue, Ashford & Myers (2012).

The playbook: eight basketball principles for AI outcomes

01

Teamwork

Shared KPIs and ownership

02

Fundamentals

Governed, AI-ready data

03

Roster

Partner and platform strategy

04

Context

Semantics, ontology, metadata

05

Implementation

Reusable patterns

06

Shot selection

Value-first portfolio

07

Defense

Responsible AI and trust

08

Long season

Maturity and change fitness

The Main Point

The fundamentals of success remain the same.



2. Fundamentals win games (1 of 2)

AI-ready data is not a cleanup project. It is a continuous practice.

Governance

Ownership, access, policies

Metadata

Meaning, lineage, freshness

Quality

Tests, observability,
remediation

Semantics

Certified metrics and
definitions

RULE OF THUMB

If the data cannot explain its grain, lineage, metric logic and permission boundary, it is not ready for enterprise AI.



2. Fundamentals win games (2 of 2)



COACH'S TIP

"We ran the same three drills every practice for four years. That is why we never lost close games."



HOW TO PRACTICE THE FUNDAMENTALS

Make data AI-ready before it is AI-visible. Ownership, quality thresholds, lineage and refresh expectations are defined on the data product, not negotiated per project.

Govern once, use everywhere. One access model and one certified definition of each metric, so the answer does not change depending on which tool asked the question.

Fundamentals are boring right up until the moment they are the only reason the AI answer can be trusted.



3. Pick your team wisely (1 of 2)

Partner strategy is not procurement. It is picking a team to go to war with.

Choose partners where they are already world-class, bring something you do not.

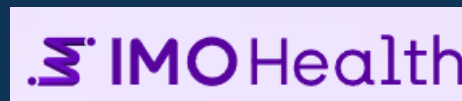
Integrate capabilities instead of accumulating tool sprawl.

Look at shared architecture, business goals, support and values.

PREMIER PROOF POINT · INTERNAL

We stopped downloading free CMS reference files and moved to IMO's lexical content.

The free files were free to download but not free to use: every release needed clean-up, and they gave us code lists rather than an ontology.



3. Pick your team wisely (2 of 2)



COACH'S TIP

"Pick the teammate who you are willing to go to war with."



HOW TO PICK PARTNERS AND PLATFORMS

Buy the capability, not the demo. Judge partners on production references, roadmap fit and how their platform behaves inside your governance model a year from now.

Choose specialists where depth matters. We use Databricks for the platform and IMO for clinical lexical and reference content rather than rebuilding either one ourselves.

Your roster is a strategy decision. Every partner you add is either reducing your build burden or adding to it.



4. Context is everything (1 of 3)

General AI is smart. Enterprise AI must be grounded.

Semantic layer

Certified metrics

Ontology

Business relationships

Metadata

Grain, lineage, synonyms

Grounding

Right source, right permissions

DATABRICKS EXAMPLE

Genie works best when curated data, metric views, synonyms, relationships, example SQL and benchmarks teach the AI how your business speaks.

Context improves quality; it does not remove the need for testing, feedback, monitoring and responsible controls.

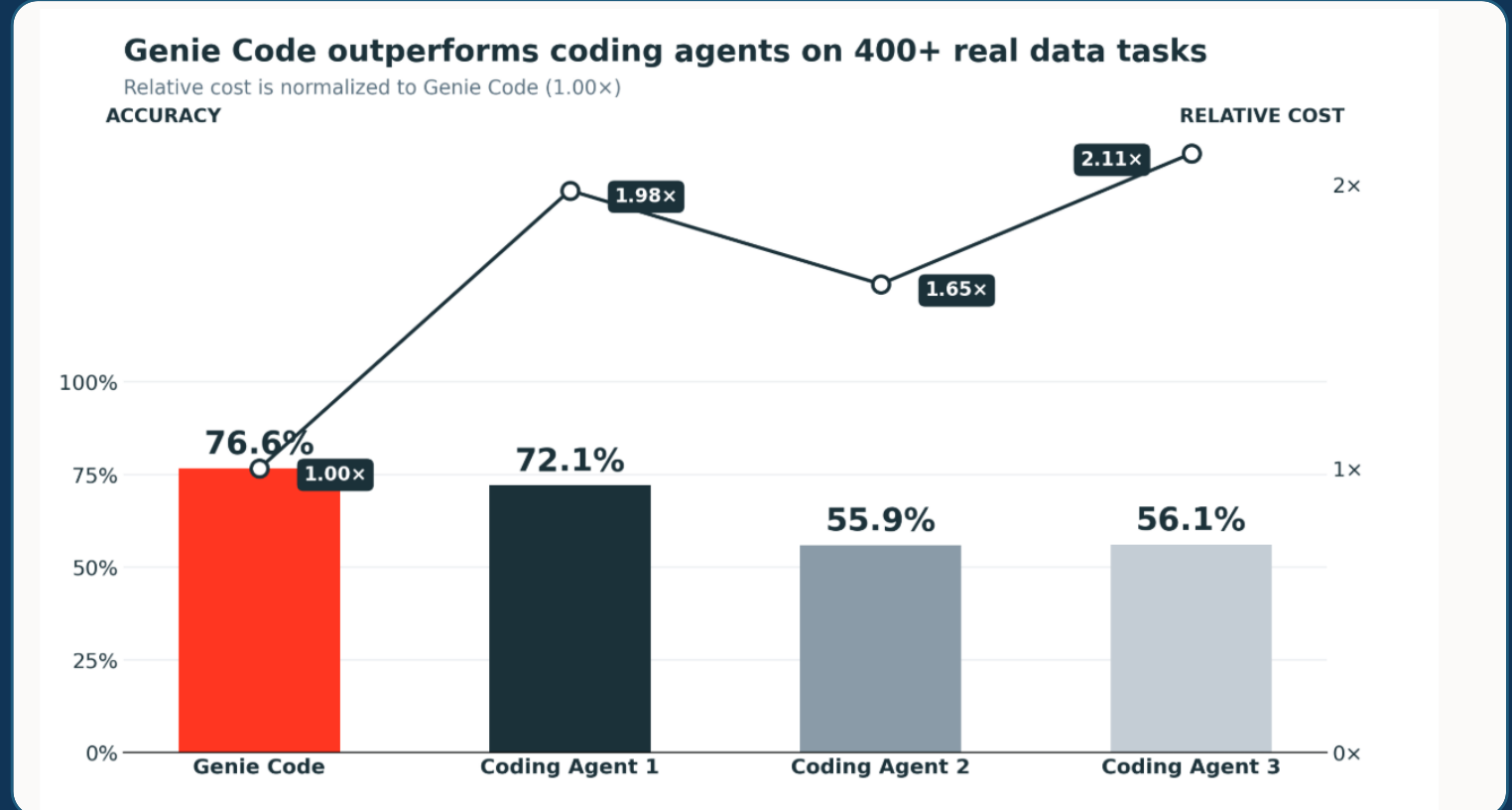


4. Context is everything (2 of 3)



Databricks CEO Ali Ghodsi

"We already have artificial general intelligence. We don't need AI to get smarter. It is just lacking context."



<https://www.databricks.com/blog/why-frontier-data-agent-outperforms-general-coding-agents-quality-and-cost>



4. Context is everything (3 of 3)



COACH'S TIP

“Go watch the other teams play, so you know how to beat them.”



HOW TO ENSURE YOUR AI HAS CONTEXT

Curate the catalog. We are enriching Unity Catalog with certified metrics, descriptions and grain so Genie can harvest context instead of guessing.

Feed the assistant. Attaching the right documents, or pointing Copilot Researcher at the correct drive, turns a generic answer into your answer.

The tactics depend on your tools and strategy. The principle does not: context is a deliberate act, not a byproduct.



Premier proof points: context, platform and workflow

Trusted, AI-ready healthcare analytics that move from insight to action.

10x

faster SQL creation with Genie
vs manual coding

3 days

to configure Genie for
production

100%

success generating accurate
reports in the case study

**Talent Re-
deployed**

INsights health systems cited in the
DB SQL story

DATABRICKS AI/BI GENIE · PREMIER CUSTOMER STORY

“Empowering smarter healthcare decisions.”

Premier helps healthcare providers easily get answers from data with Databricks AI/BI Genie, on Databricks SQL and Azure.

CUSTOMER STORY

Empowering smarter healthcare decisions

Premier helps healthcare providers easily get answers from data with Databricks AI/BI Genie

10x

Faster SQL creation with Genie
compared to manual coding

3 days

To configure Genie
for production

100%

Success in generating
accurate reports for the
business



INDUSTRY: [Healthcare and Life Sciences](#)
SOLUTION: [Forward-Looking Intelligence](#), [Patient Risk](#), [Recommendation Engines](#)
PLATFORM: [Databricks SQL](#)
CLOUD: [Azure](#)

“Genie is accelerating data-driven insights that help us deliver on our mission of improving the health of communities. By making it easier for our provider and supplier customers to get insights, we’re enabling better, smarter and faster healthcare.”



5. Implement, don't invent

Winning teams practice proven patterns until they become muscle memory.

Start with reference architectures and reusable components.

Use vendor-native capabilities where they are already strong.

Build what differentiates your workflow, not what recreates the platform.

OPERATING DISCIPLINE

Treat AI delivery like product delivery.

Versioning, test suites, telemetry, rollback, runbooks and adoption loops.



COACH'S TIP

“Nobody invents a new dribble the night before the game.”



HOW TO EXECUTE

Adopt the vendor's native capability first, wrap it in your own governance and workflow, and reserve custom build for the part that is genuinely yours. Ship it like product. Constantly re-measure



6. Run high-percentage plays first (1 of 2)

AI portfolios fail when they chase novelty instead of value density.

High value / Low risk

RUN FIRST

High value / High risk

PILOT WITH GUARDRAILS

Low value / Low risk

AUTOMATE LATER

Low value / High risk

AVOID

PORTFOLIO FILTER

Clear owner

Measurable outcome

Data and semantic readiness

Workflow adoption path

Risk controls



6. Run high-percentage plays first (2 of 2)



COACH'S TIP

"You were benched not because you made it, but because normally you wouldn't."



HOW TO RUN HIGH-PERCENTAGE PLAYS

Start with accelerators. Reference architectures, partner solutions and pre-built agents already carry the reps.

Give proofs of concept a strategy. Named owner, success measure and time box up front, plus an honest answer to what happens if it works.

Manage it as a portfolio. Score on value, feasibility and data readiness, then review on a cadence so losers get cut and winners get scaled.

You do not win by taking harder shots. You win by taking more of the shots you already make.



The closed-loop operating model

The goal is not an answer. The goal is action, remeasurement and improvement.

01

Ask

Business question

02

Ground

Data and context

03

Recommend

Opportunity and
action

04

Execute

Workflow and partner

05

Remeasure

Outcome and
adoption

SIGNATURE LINE

Everyone can show AI. What matters is production - and production means the loop closes.



Closed Loop: Insights to Action

Insight only counts when it closes the loop back to measured outcomes.

01

BENCHMARK

Compare practice against national data to find where variation is costing us.

02

TARGET THE INSIGHT

Cohort Builder narrows the finding to the specific patients and clinicians behind it.

03

HARDWIRE THE CHANGE

Clinical decision support and procedure-specific protocols put the evidence in the workflow.

04

REMEASURE

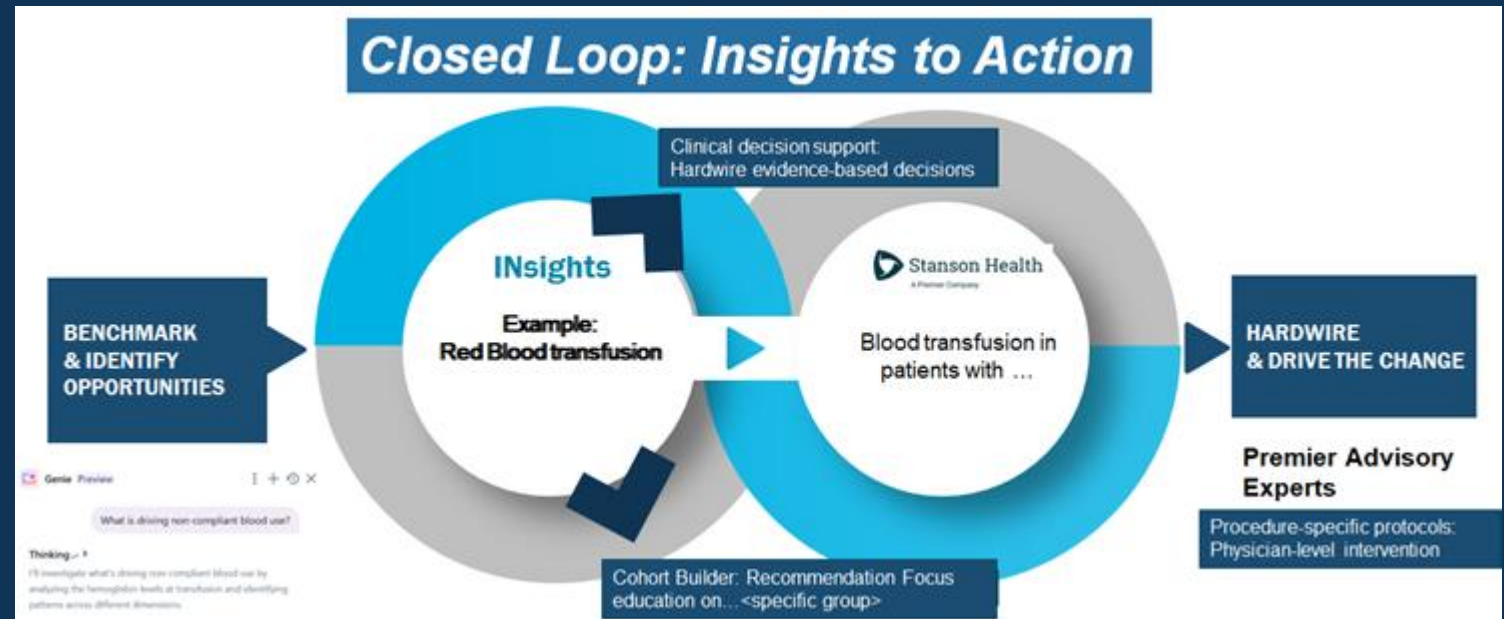
Track outcomes, monitor and adjust, then feed the result back into the benchmark.

COACH'S TIP

“Don’t run a play unless they score.”

HOW TO EXECUTE

Have a concrete plan to drive the outcome: name the owner, the measure and the date, then remeasure and adjust until the number moves.



Internal Premier example. Screen shown is illustrative.

Monday morning: the CDAO action plan

1

Pick one high-percentage AI use case

Named owner, success measure, time box, and an answer to what happens if it works

2

Pick your roster

Platform, specialist content and a clear build-versus-buy line

3

Build the semantic contract

Certified metrics, grain, lineage, synonyms, permissions

4

Ground the AI in context

Curated data, ontology, examples, benchmarks, feedback

5

Ship the workflow

Embed in dashboards, apps, advisory or operations

6

Review the scoreboard

Adoption, accuracy, cost, risk, business impact



The winning AI team does three things

01

Aligns to a scoreboard

Business outcomes before
demos

02

Grounds AI in context

AI-ready data, semantics,
certified meaning

03

Closes the loop

Action, remeasurement,
improvement

No quit in ship.

What Play are You Going to Run First?



Thank you



Appendix

APPENDIX

The rest of the playbook, and the receipts.

Consolidated references, plus teamwork, defense and the long season.



Appendix: consolidated references

McKinsey, The State of AI in 2025 - adoption, scaling, EBIT impact, workflow redesign, high-performer practices.

MIT NANDA, The GenAI Divide 2025 - pilot-to-production gap, workflow and context learning gap.

Gartner 2025 CDAO Survey - business impact measurement gap; 2026 D&A predictions on semantic layers and governance.

Deloitte 2026 CDAO Survey - CDAO influence, ROI pressure, data modernization, data quality and access.

Harvard Business School Working Knowledge - change fitness as an AI scaling capability.

Microsoft - 365 Copilot architecture and Responsible AI Transparency Report; grounding, permissions, governance, risk.

Databricks - Unity Catalog Business Semantics; Genie best practices; agent metadata; Genie Code benchmark.

Databricks customer stories - Premier AI/BI Genie and DB SQL; proof points and cited outcomes.

Premier internal artifacts - Project Phoenix, CTO INsights architecture recommendation, DBSQL case study



Appendix · 1. Teamwork beats individual talent

The best AI programs align business, data, product, security and operations around the same scoreboard.

Shared scoreboard

Outcome KPIs come before model KPIs.

Cross-functional ownership

Business value, data quality and workflow adoption each have an owner.

Leaders model the change

Teams redesign work, not just tools.

EXECUTIVE MOVE

Create a “starting five” for every AI initiative.

Business owner, data owner, product owner, risk owner, adoption owner.



Appendix · 7. Defense wins championships

Trust is not the tax on AI. Trust is what lets AI scale.

Govern

Roles, policies, accountability

Map

Use cases, risks, context

Measure

Tests, evaluations,
benchmarks

Manage

Mitigations, monitoring,
response

GUARDRAILS TO SCALE RESPONSIBLY

Permission-trimmed access | Human validation for high-impact decisions

Bias, privacy and security testing | Audit trails and incident response

Business owner accountable for outcomes



Appendix - 8. Play the long season

AI maturity is built through repetitions, not announcements.

01

Offseason

Data foundation and governance

02

Preseason

Targeted pilots and benchmarks

03

Regular season

Workflow adoption and scale

04

Playoffs

Value realization and reinvestment

LEADERSHIP MUSCLE

Build "change fitness".

AI literacy, role clarity, decision rights, workflow redesign and reward systems that reinforce learning.

